

REMARKS

Applicants respectfully request favorable reconsideration of this application in view of the following remarks.

Claim 8 has been amended to correct a typographical error.

Each of independent Claims 1 and 8 stands rejected over Nolte in view of Connell et al. (Connell). Applicants respectfully traverse.

Claim 1, for example, recites a central bearing including a cylindrical first tube of a plastics material that surrounds a central collapsible steering shaft, that is slidably mounted in a bore of a second tube of the upper column assembly, and that rotatably supports the central collapsible steering shaft at a lower end of the first tube. Note the arrangement of elements 11, 9 and 4 in Fig. 3.

The rejection acknowledges that Nolte lacks a central bearing including a plastics tube as claimed. The rejection thus additionally relies upon Connell, specifically contending that Connell teaches a central bearing 40 made of thermoplastic material. In point of fact, however, Connell's element 40 is a ball carrying sleeve 40 that has **no** bearing function; it is merely a carrier for ball bearings 42, 44, which actually provide the bearing function in Connell's structure. Indeed, Connell explicitly teaches that the thermoplastic ball carrying sleeve 40 has no contact with the first and second tubes (see Column 4, Lines 27-33). Moreover, the thermoplastic ball carrying sleeve 40

does not rotatably support the central collapsible steering shaft at a lower end of the first tube, as recited in Claim 1. The Office's contention regarding Connell is therefore erroneous as, consequently, is the rejection of Claim 1.

As to independent Claim 8, it is apparent that the rejection is erroneous for reasons similar to those discussed above with respect to Claim 1.

In view of the remarks presented herein, Applicants respectfully urge that the outstanding rejections be withdrawn and that this application be passed to issue.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge to Deposit Account No. 50-1165 any fees under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 and 1.17 that may be required by this paper and to credit any overpayment to that Account. If any extension of time is required in connection with the filing of this paper and has not been requested separately, such extension is hereby requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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